

Summary of the NELAC Board of Directors Meeting September 23, 1999

The Board of Directors of the National Environmental Laboratory Accreditation Conference (NELAC) convened by teleconference at 1:30 p.m. on September 23, 1999; committee chairs had been invited to join at 2:00pm. The meeting was led by the Board Chair, Dr. James Pearson using the agenda distributed previously to board members. Action items are shown in Attachment A, incomplete action items from past meetings are shown in Attachment B and the list of participants is shown in Attachment C.

Introduction

Dr. Pearson reviewed the draft agenda; action items from the past meetings were reviewed.

Summary of NELAP AA Meeting

Dr. Fred Siegelman reviewed discussions of recent Accrediting Authorities Group meeting. He noted that it was their decision that meetings should be open only to staff from NELAP-recognized Accrediting Authorities. Since discussion of many issues are continuing, they plan to arrive at a consensus prior to making it available for posting on the NELAC web site. He reported that current discussions include details relating to reciprocity issues, interim accreditation issues, and the level of detail of laboratory audits.

Update on NELAP Staffing

Dr. Siegelman reported that a detail as NELAC Executive Secretary has been offered to an EPA staff member who knows NELAC extremely well and has many relevant laboratory and NELAC contacts.

He reported that an EPA mission support contract has been awarded which can be used to provide support for

- the Fifth NELAC Interim Meeting (NELAC Vi), scheduled for December 14-16, 1999 at the J.W. Marriott hotel in Washington DC and
- the Sixth NELAC Annual Meeting (NELAC VI), scheduled for June 26-29, 2000 at the Fort Magruder Inn & Conference Center in Williamsburg, VA.

Dr. Siegelman noted that EPA remains firmly committed to continued development and implementation NELAC.

Status of Committee Appointments

Dr. Pearson noted that all committee appointments have been sent, with copies to the NELAC board members and respective committee chairs. The only exception is for the newly designated Field Activities committee.

WPI Courses

Dr. Siegelman reported that he has contacted WPI regarding their query on presenting a course in conjunction with NELAC meetings. He indicated that their intention was to offer "Implementing NELAC in Your Laboratory" which was presented in conjunction with the Waste Testing & Quality Assurance symposium last summer; intentions were that the course be offered "for fee". Considering the late response to this query, it is now too late to offer at NELAC Vi. Dr. Siegelman recommended that this board should establish a policy for responding future offers.

Indian Nations Option Paper

Dr. Pearson asked for general comments on the option paper for including Indian nations in the NELAC structure. It was generally agreed that this appears to be a desirable extension of NELAC membership, however it raises non-trivial implementation issues due to the difference in legal standing of a State and an Indian nation. Following extensive discussion it was agreed that Dr. Siegelman should attempt to have Gary King and Marlene Regelski participate in a future teleconference to share their expertise on the issue.

Chairs

Dr. Pearson then polled committee chairs for information they wished to share with the Board.

On-site Assessment --Steve Baker, chair:

Mr. Baker reported that the committee met yesterday and reviewed the laboratory assessor's training course materials that have been drafted for days 1-3 of the 5 day course; materials for day 4 will be delivered shortly for the committee's review. Mr. Baker reported that there is general approval of the materials that have been received.

He noted that an issue that needs to be addressed is a section on assessor ethics, including the authority for the material and its appropriateness in the course. There were several comments that this material is needed in order to provide coverage for all eventualities in the implementation of NELAP. He agreed to forward training course materials to the board as soon as possible.

In response to a question on the relationship of the course and the assessor checklists, Mr. Baker noted that there are too many options being discussed to address this issue presently. The committee prefers that the checklists not be part of the Standard in order to allow the necessary flexibility; however it was suggested that inclusion might foster coordination between committees during chapters revisions. If the checklists are not to be included in the chapter, then there should be language in the Standards specifying their use; Mr. Baker will raise this issue with the committee.

Transition – Ms. Carol Batterton, cochair

Ms. Batterton reported that in the committee reviewed a proposal from the Global Institute of Environmental Scientists (GIES) to sponsor laboratory assessor training sessions. A draft proposal for an initial assessor training session was requested is to be available to the committee for review at its October 1 meeting. The length of training and its exact structure is to be examined; Mr. Baker noted that OA is working to ensure adequate, consistent assessor training. Since there are several options for course presentation and format, OA will be removing the requirement for a specific number of days and focus on content requirements. Other issues including timing for course presentation, costs, eligibility of participants is also being discussed by the committee.

Other topics discussed during the previous meeting of the committee include a list of implementation issues and reciprocity sequencing during the first round of laboratory accreditations

National Database – Mr. Matthew Caruso, chair

Mr. Caruso said there is nothing to report to the Board at this time.

Regulatory Coordination – Mr. Michel Miller, chair

Mr. Miller reported that the committee has a teleconference scheduled in the near future and it is fully staffed. A major issue to be discussed is the scope of fields of testing.

Accrediting Authority -- Mr. John Anderson, chair

Mr. Anderson noted that the committee has scheduled a teleconference for October 29 and that an issue that has been raised regards the logistics of a NELAC accredited laboratory transitioning to its home State accrediting authority from an out-of-State accrediting authority (differences in scheduling are the primary issues).

He also noted that consistency of accrediting authority evaluations, at the NELAP program level, are a concern, and will involve interactions with the Accrediting Authority Review Board (AARB). This issue will be coordinated with the efforts of the Program Policy and Structure committee which meets next week. He also noted that the committee is receiving suggestions for minor changes in the implementation of the NELAP program that it will share at the appropriate time.

Field Measurements – Dr. Bart Simmons, chair

Dr. Simmons reported that this *ad hoc* committee is working on issues related to its dissolution and the functioning of the newly created Field Activities standing committee. Dr. Simmons noted that he has received sufficient qualified nominations for nominating to the committee and he will be working with Dr. Pearson to finalize those appointments.

He also reported that the committee is in the process of drafting an air standard for discussion at NELAC VI. Additionally, the committee is reviewing standards from other countries (especially Australia), as well as reviewing the definitions “permanent”, “temporary”, “mobile” labs for discussion at NELAC VI. Mr. Baker noted that his committee will have many issues to raise with the new committee.

Program Policy and Structure – Dr. Marcia Davies, chair

Dr. Davies reported that her committee is continuing work with comments received and on refining the glossary for Chapter One of the NELAC standards. Additionally, the committee will address the issue raised by the Accrediting Authority committee.

Proficiency Testing – Ms. Barbara Burmeister, chair

Ms. Burmeister reported that the committee will review the finalized interpretive guidance document at its next meeting. Also, the committee has scheduled a face-to-face meeting for October 25-26, 1999 to evaluate all the extensive comments that have been received. Additionally, the nomination for a replacement of a retiring committee member has been FAXed to Dr. Pearson for his appointment.

Quality Systems – Mr. Joe Slayton, chair

Mr. Slayton reported that his committee is meeting weekly to address 12 sets of comments that have been received. He noted that the committee is endeavoring to maintain the stability of the approved standards, in conformance to the Board’s policy (Policy on Revision of Standards, No. 5, 1/7/99), while carefully considering these comments.

He reported that:

- the committee is considering previously unaddressed materials (recordkeeping, sample tracking, COC) including comments received from the Department of Defense,
- the committee is considering definitions in the glossary that pertain to the chapter,
- the committee is considering “editorial” changes,
- the subcommittee on microbiology testing (Appendix D, section 3) is revisiting the section in order to simplify and clarify requirements while retaining the present requirements,
- the subcommittee on air testing (Appendix D, section 5) has been reconvened, and
- the committee is revising its process for submitting comments, based on its experience with its present process

Next Meeting

There being no further business, the meeting was adjourned. The next meeting is scheduled for October 28, 1999.

Action Items
NELAC Board of Directors/Committee Chairs Teleconference
September 23, 1999

Item No.	Action	Status
1.	This board should establish a policy for responding future offers of NELAC-associated activities at national meetings.	
2.	Dr. Siegelman will attempt to have Gary King and Marlene Regelski participate in a future teleconference to share their expertise regarding Indian nations' inclusion in NELAC.	
3.	Mr. Baker agreed to forward training course materials to the board as soon as possible.	
4.	Mr. Baker will raise the issue of linking assessor checklists with the NELAC standard with the On-site Assessment committee.	
5.	Dr. Bart Simmons will forward the nomination package for Field Activities committee members to Dr. Pearson.	

Incomplete Action Items from Past Teleconferences

Date of Meeting	Action	Status
01/11/99	Committee Chairs are to prepare "Frequently Asked Questions" for posting on the website. They are to submit these to Dr. Irene Ronning.	On-going
01/07/99	Ms. Mourrain, and Mr. Slayton will develop a policy on handling of comments and, also, will develop a standardized letter.	On-going
02/04/99	Ms. Mourrain, Ms. Batterton, Ms. Sample and Dr. Hartwig will work on developing a training program for the Committee Chairs.	On-going
05/27/99	Dr. Jackson will prepare another letter to the Assistant Administrator for Water regarding their PT program and Ms. Mourrain will contact Steve Clark to let him know that a follow-up letter will be forthcoming.	On-going - Dr. Jackson Completed - Ms. Mourrain
05/27/99	Dr. Jackson will send the Board members a list of States that are not participating in NELAC committees so that the Board members can solicit participation.	On-going
06/17/99	Dr. Irene Ronning is to present a proposal for selecting liaisons to the Membership and Outreach Committee from each of the other committees. She is to prepare this for the next Board of Directors meeting.	On-going
07/31/99	Dr. Ken Jackson will draft a letter to the Editors of the Environmental Laboratory Washington Report pointing out the inaccuracies in the ACIL article.	On-going
8/27/99	Committee Liaison should make it a priority that their committees have a full complement of members.	
8/27/99	Gene Tatsch may query the RTI mailing database for NELAC meeting participants with local municipality affiliation	
8/27/99	Dr. Siegelman, Dr. Pearson, and Ms. Batterton will share meeting planning information with Dr. Brokopp in preparation for NELAC VII.	
8/27/99	Board members are to study the Draft AARB charter and be prepared to discuss it in detail next month.	

List of Participants
Board of Directors/Committee Chairs Teleconference
September 23, 1999

Name	Affiliation	Telephone Numbers
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